

# He Was Modest as a Hunter, But Had Fought in the Argonne

## ON PARADISE PEAKS

Blithesome Tale of the Rockies  
BY CHARLES COLLINS

THE conventional playthings of millions of boys are not old man Angus. He had worked with the big flat in his time, and now he would spend with the open hand. But he wanted space for the golden sowing; he wanted to be monarch of all he surveyed.

So he engaged a geologic age for his landscape gardener and bought himself a Titian's share of the Rocky mountains. The water from eternal snows had gnawed canyons; tornadoes had turned sculptor; forests had painted bleak slopes with the blessings of green—in order that old man Angus might have his plaything.

Paradise Peaks he called it, having a fancy for alliteration.

The Manor, set deep in the lodge-pole pine and aspens of Clearwater valley, was the heart of the demesne. There old man Angus through the sweet, thrilling months of the mountain summer played grand host to his guests.

He supplied all accessories to adventure, from trout flies to guns that would slay an elephant. The fifteen hunting lodges scattered over Paradise Peaks, each had its arsenal, its library, its store of liquors, its string of horses and its guides at the disposal of guests.

Old man Angus had a plaything that cannot be matched on this continent. He also had a daughter. There the story really begins.

Columbine, aged twenty, had been everywhere and seen everything—Angus' money had taken care of all that; but her soul belonged to her native west, and she remained simple, wholesome and feminine.

Of course this Columbine had her Pierrot—in plural. That summer there were two of them. One was strongly favored by Angus as future son-in-law. Chandler was what society reporters call an "eligible bachelor," which means that he was nearer forty than thirty. His career had been devoted exclusively to the sporting achievements of the unnecessarily rich.

The other Pierrot, who had followed Columbine to her mountain habitat, fitted into the natural environment, for he was a poet. Columbine had discovered him at the University of Chicago, where she had dabbled in the Pierian spring as a special student in English literature the winter before; and when a few dancing parties at the Quadrangle Club had warmed up a casual classroom acquaintance into something more lively, she had invited him out to papa's principality for a summer's airing. She had been timid in making the suggestion, for he, being a faculty member with some exalted title, moved on a higher academic plane than she could ever hope to reach.

He had accepted her invitation, and with some fishing tackle, an old riding suit and an anthology of Victorian verse in his kit, came to Paradise Peaks to worship nature—and Columbine. He had not suspected that he was pursuing a princess of the continental divide.

Ghent felt at a loss in the Paradise Peaks crowd. Although it was affable enough, and its wits were pleasantly negative, its talk was not his talk. They were all, like Angus, impressively rich; and also, like John Eustace Chandler, they were apparently adept at every extravagant amusement. They had been all over the map; and he, Rodrick Ghent, had been nowhere in particular, except to Harvard.

Moreover, he had not brought along his dress suit. He gathered that dinner was a full-dress affair at the Manor, and he would have fled back to civilization and simplicity immediately if the railroad station had not been a hard forty miles of motor-driving away. In a panic he rushed to Columbine for advice, and she calmed his embarrassment with such tactful sympathy and resourcefulness that his adoration of her reached a new summit of ecstasy. The merrily said, with her gentlest smile: "Don't worry. I think I can find you what you want."

Then she pressed a button and conferred with an austere major domo. Within a few minutes an equipment of what young Mr. Ghent, in his lighter moments, called "soup-and-fish," was laid out in his room, complete from socks to cuff links. What was more important, the clothes fitted him.

"Am I in the wild west or the Arabian nights?" he asked himself as he studied the perfect fit of somebody else's dress coat across his shoulders.

Before Ghent's coming there had been some trouble about her learned and poetic tenderfoot. The badinage had been led, of course, by Mr. Chandler of New York, who knew all the Rocky mountains by their first names.

In the dinner-table talk Ghent was asked if he rode, or if a horse for fifteen years," he answered cheerfully. "Did he like trout fishing?" Ghent, candid itself, did not know, never having tried it. But he liked to fish.

Ah, yes; where did he do his fishing? Ghent mentioned northern Wisconsin and black bass, but his remarks were received coldly. Bait-casting for black bass, he began to perceive, was distinctly lower-class. Some one, to save the situation, carelessly referred to a sea bass weighing 421 pounds which he had caught off the Catalina Islands after eleven hours of desperate battle.

Did he shoot? "Well, yes—in a sort of a way. What did he fancy in the line of shooting?" Grouse? Wild turkey—deer, elk, bear? They were to be heard herabouts in abundance, and Paradise Peaks knew no game seasons.

Ghent could not specify his choice of wild creatures for killing, and Mr. Chandler saw fit to talk in a large manner about the snow-leopards he had shot in the Himalayas, the summer of 1914, with his friend, Lieut. Col. Apudoc Jones of the Bengal Lancers. The war had ended big-game shooting, Mr. Chandler continued, but it was beginning again with the coming of peace, and a man

who wanted adventure could now go out and have some sport.

Ghent then knew that his instinct to hate Mr. Chandler was a just and true emotion.

THE talk of guns and kills ran around the table until Ghent wanted to shriek. He managed to silence the babler at his elbow who was telling of his great massacre of ducks last November on the Bear river marshes in Utah.

"I find as I grow older," said Ghent, with a world-weary air, "that the pleasure of hunting, for its own sake, dies out. I have come to believe that a man has a right to kill each day only enough for that day's food."

The man who had spoken of seventeen dozen ducks in one morning's bag thought of eating them all within three meals, and considered himself snubbed as a game-hog.

Then Columbine began to talk of books to Ghent. Kenneth Angus, Columbine's brother, a few years older, who had been wrapped in moody silence, pricked up his ears and joined in their conversation intelligently.

Kenneth, who had been blighted in love while at Yale, was in the habit of wandering from one hunting-lodge to another, with only an old guide for companion.

Angus' younger Columbine took Ghent out to a corner of the veranda to see what she called her demi-tasse view. He began to feel lyric and exalted. Was it because a poem was coming on—or because Columbine, in a platitude sort of way, was letting him hold her hand?

With heavy feet that gave satisfactory warning Angus and Mr. Chandler rode down along the long veranda toward them.

Chandler had sensed a foe in Ghent. He did not rate him as a rival, but as an annoyance. So he adroitly proceeded to poison the wells of this wayfarer.

"Ah, Mr. Ghent," no asked, in his most clubby fashion, "are you getting an inspiration for a poem from the sunset?"

Angus, in whose code poets were a third and lamentable sex, grunted at this, and Ghent knew that he had been betrayed.

He became nervous and therefore stupid. His throat became dry; he sneezed; he coughed; he followed it with a hacking little cough. Although he didn't know it, this was a high-altitude, dry-climate reaction from the respiratory tract of a lowlander.

But Mr. Chandler seized his opportunity.

"You're not catching cold, are you, Mr. Ghent?" he asked fondly.

Ghent felt himself branded as an invalid.

BRIGHT and early the next morning Columbine sought out Jim Ripley, better known as old Rip, foreman of the guides, to give him certain confidential instructions. For the benefit of the visiting easterners Old Rip dressed himself like the hero of a wild west film; however, he was a simple, gentle soul, master of the craft of mountains and plains.

"Well, Miss Columbine," he said, after she had confided in him, "he must be some tenderfoot, but I'll see that he don't come to no harm. Me and him will just play around quiet like."

"I don't think he is very strong, Jim," she said wistfully, "and I don't want the other men to make fun of him."

"I'll give him Eagle, who's the truest horse in the state, and if there's any laughing to be done it will be my own private picnic," Old Rip promised.

So when Ghent emerged from the Manor after breakfast he was accompanied by a friendly old customer who asked if he didn't want to be introduced to his horse, and went down to the stables to meet his fate. He observed that Eagle, a flea-bitten gray with a look of responsibility, had an amiable eye; he listened to a drivel lecture upon the habits and character of this particular horse, and with an ease that was surprising in the victim of a hacking cough, he swung up into the saddle.

Three days later old Rip reported: "Don't worry about that tenderfoot of yours, Miss Columbine. I'm learnin' him fast, and he seems to like it. The first morning I took him out for a little walk on Eagle to break him in gentle. We just rambled over the sage-brush in the front yard, and he asked a million questions. In the afternoon I gave him a whirl at the trout in Willow creek. He's a rotten fly-caster—keeps snapping off the flies and cussin' the man that invented 'em. Says it's a fiddlin' foolish sport for a city-bred minister and heavy swell from Long Island. 'Who wants to keep flippin' a snip of feathers around in a high wind?' he says. The next day we did ten miles and got some action. And yesterday we tore off twenty and clumb some mountains. The boy's got pep, Miss Columbine, and he's got to be a ridin' fool. He fits into a horse natural-like."

Columbine began to feel reassured. She observed approvingly that Ghent was taking on a becoming tan instead of the scarlet-nosed sunburn with which Mr. Chandler was showing the effects of the climate.

As for Ghent's mood, it improved every day. Except for the fact that he wasn't seeing enough and Mr. Chandler was seeing too much of Columbine, he was enjoying himself. He continued to freeze up, however, when the mighty hunters began to shoot big game verbally around the dinner table.

A few days later Mr. Chandler began to lust for the blood of a deer, and an expedition to Snowdrift ridge was planned for that night. Angus was to go along, and so were two lesser hunters of the dinner table, Mr. Chandler, out of the goodness of his heart, suggested that Ghent should join them.

"You'll see a deer, anyway," he remarked, "and the ozone up on Snowdrift is recommended by doctors."

Ghent accepted promptly. Then Columbine said she would go too.

"Nonsense!" boomed Angus, "it's too hard a ride for you, my dear."

"Don't be silly, Dad," she retorted sharply. "I can ride there and back again without getting out of the saddle. I want to see Mr. Chandler

get his buck. Besides, I think that Kenneth's jealousy was at the lodge."

"All right," he growled. "We'll go up there together and chase Kenneth out of the woods."

Old Rip rode with the cavalcade, as was his duty as chief of guides. The man regularly stationed at Snowdrift and Kenneth's familiar spirit were to be conscripted into the party on arrival.

Ghent made no moan and for the first fifteen miles he satisfied himself and old Rip as a gay cavalier. So Mr. Chandler sprang another plot to ruin him.

The elder Angus was taking things easily an dingling behind. The two hunters, also being men of years, struggled along to keep him company. Old Rip kept within view. Mr. Chandler was persistently riding with Columbine, and as Eagle was showing a bright and eager spirit Ghent found himself leading the parade.

SUDDENLY there was a clatter of hoofs behind him, and Mr. Chandler appeared alongside. Eagle jumped out, and Chandler gave his horse a pat of the quiet. Chandler's bay was thrusting his nose ahead of Eagle's blue muzzle; Eagle resented this and so did Ghent. He spurred.

It became a wild gallop for half a mile. Chandler was using leather like a jockey, but Ghent merely spoke sweet words of cheer to Eagle and gave him his head.

The road ran along the high shoulder of a hill. Its disappearing turn down a steep slope was close ahead. Chandler shouted a warning at Ghent and checked the charging gallop of his bay. Ghent vanished.

A quarter of a mile down the hill road he managed to persuade the ramping Eagle that speed was no longer necessary, and turned back.

Columbine had been in fierce pursuit of them, and now she was talking to Chandler like a mother.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she was saying. "You know that Eagle is an old cow pony with a reputation to sustain. Mr. Ghent might have been thrown at that turn. You know he can't ride."

"I'm beginning to think he can," muttered Chandler.

A few miles farther on the tireless pointer dog that had followed the cavalcade gave tongue in a way that signified a coyote. Old Rip's telescope eye picked the coyote out as he squatted among the sagebrush.

"A pretty shot," suggested Rip, and Mr. Chandler plucked out his carbine, dismounted, took careful aim, and fired. A puff of dust flew up near the coyote, and then a yellow streak whizzed over the gray hills.

Another rifle cracked. Ghent had fired from the saddle. The yellow streak jerked up into the air and collapsed.

"That's shootin'!" shouted Rip. "Sheer luck," declared Ghent. "Too bad to kill the poor thing—but they're a kind of pest, aren't they?"

SNOWDRIFT LODGE perched on the bowlders on the sunny slope of the left ridge after which it was named, not far from the crest.

The party arrived, took possession and prepared its travel-sore bodies with food, drink and sleep for the great deeds of the morrow. Kenneth was there; however, he sulked in his room.

Paradise Peaks knew no game laws, in practice, except those ordained by the lord of the domain.

But as the faithful keeper of his own preserve, Mr. Angus ordained that the does should always be spared.

Ghent went out next day with old Rip to make a pretense at deer shooting. There was nothing else to do, unless he wanted to stay on the front porch and sulk with Kenneth. After several false alarms, old Rip stood up in his stirrups and peered like a bird of prey. Then he stealthily got off his horse and began to crawl down the slope, taking cover behind rocks. Ghent imitated these Indian tactics. At last Rip crouched under the blasted trunk of a fallen tree and waited. When Ghent came to look over the tree and then pointed.

"I don't see anything," Ghent whispered. "Well, there he is, even if you can't see him. See him in your mind. See where his head is, and his neck, and his shoulder, and his foreleg. Put one square into his shoulder, and blow his heart out."

Ghent drew a mental picture of the deer, aimed with designs upon the deer's heart, and fired. Then came the sound of a falling and a threshing about among the aspens.

"Got him!" Old Rip leaped up. "Good kid!" There was also the sound of another commotion among the aspens, growing more and more distant.

"That's funny," said old Rip. "Did he get up and run? He ought to have done his runnin' first. Never mind; we'll find him."

They went back to the horses and then rode down to find the victim.

There was a deer among the "bakin' asp," but it was a doe! Old Rip, breathing strange oaths and lamentations, deduced this story. There had been two deer, buck and doe, browsing among the aspen side by side. The doe had taken the bullet, and thus brought calamity upon the reputation of woodcraft of Paradise Peaks' top guide.

"And now we've got to dress the bride of the phantom buck and pack her into camp," Rip announced, "and that's some job. I've always played on the square with the old man, so back to camp he goes to get us into trouble. Sorry, well, she means venison for dinner, anyway."

In spite of Rip's brooding, however, Ghent did not realize the full iniquity of his deed, from a sporting point of view, until dinner time.

Then Mr. Chandler, after describing the sagacity with which he had stalked and killed a fine buck that afternoon, asked accusingly:

"Who shot the doe I saw around in back of the lodge?"

Old man Angus turned black as a thundercloud.

"I killed her," said Ghent calmly. "I'm sorry, Mr. Angus. It was an accident."

Columbine silenced her father with

a look, but the situation was strained. Then Rip, who was dining with them—for democracy prevailed at the hunting lodges—spoke up. He told the story and took the blame upon himself, ending with:

"Anyway it was a good shot. He really killed the buck, but the fool doe got in the way."

Angus didn't believe a word of it, and told Rip so.

Ghent was crushed, in spite of Columbine's looks of sympathy. He wondered how soon it would be before he could catch a train for Denver.

"Never mind," said Columbine softly. "Tomorrow you shall go out and get a buck bigger than Mr. Chandler's."

"I'm through with killing deer," he answered. "I can't stand the look in their eyes when they die."

Mr. Chandler was in great form for the rest of the evening. He could not let the topic of Ghent's doe rest.

SOME good came out of Mr. Chandler's jocularity. Angus was thereby restored to cheerful frame of mind. Even Columbine seemed to regard Chandler's comic muse with favor, for she told him that she knew where the biggest buck on Paradise Peaks had his stamping ground, and that tomorrow they would go out together—without a guide—and get him. He had the finest antlers she had ever seen, she said.

This suggestion caused Angus to beam upon them, and sent Mr. Chandler

trout seems to regard them with suspicion. Kenneth, however, has been watching them two and three at a time.

"On worms!" Kenneth bellowed shamelessly.

"Good! We'll have trout for a campfire luncheon. Won't that be nice, Mr. Chandler?"

"It would be nice if Chandler had to clean the fish," Kenneth declared to the distant hills.

Ghent cleaned the fish; Kenneth made the fire and peeled the potatoes; Columbine was chief cook, and Mr. Chandler offered suggestions. But it was a successful luncheon.

"Where's that prehistoric buck you went out to get?" Kenneth wanted to know of Columbine and Chandler.

"Oh, we're trailing him," Columbine answered evasively.

"Did you think he came down here to take his daily bath?"

Mr. Chandler averred that they certainly had seen the hoof-prints of an extremely large deer. Columbine changed the subject.

"I should like a swim," said Ghent sleepily.

Chandler spoke almost lyrically of the joys of surf-riding at Honolulu, and Ghent was tempted in his youth.

"How wide is this lake?" he asked Columbine.

Ghent showed the note to Kenneth. "She has something up her sleeve," he said after studying it. "We'll row back, get the horses and follow. Well, I guess Chandler will have to admit you're champion in water sports and pastimes. Say, how did you get that scar on your shoulder?"

"Where do you think I was a few years ago?" asked Ghent as he pulled on his shirt.

Kenneth reflected, "Army?" Ghent nodded, "Argonne." Kenneth broke into a cheer.

"This will be a great laugh on dad and Chandler. That accounts for your lucky shot at the coyote, I'm thinking."

"Yes, I had a sharpshooter's medal. And the cough that worried Chandler is a souvenir of boche gas."

"Corp. Ghent, the pacifist sniper, I salute you!" Kenneth gloated. "Are you ready, sergeant? Let's go."

Deep in a forest canyon, about an hour later, they heard two shots, not far ahead.

"Chandler has potted the demon buck, I fear," said Kenneth. He gave a cowboy's yell, which received a faint and apparently feminine answer.

"That's Sis. Something's doing."

A LITTLE further on, they could hear laughter, long and unstrained.

"Sis is in hysterics," Kenneth suggested flippantly.



GHENT FIRED FROM THE SADDLE. THE YELLOW STREAK COLLAPSED. "THAT'S SHOOTIN'" SHOUTED RIP.

dier to bed almost ready to announce his engagement. Ghent's feelings may be indicated by the fact that he spent half the night sitting up with Kenneth in a discussion of Baudelaire, with benedictine and brandy on the side.

He slept late the next morning and awoke to find the lodge deserted except for himself and Kenneth, also a tardy riser. The latter was inclined to grumble because his guide and factotum had been commandeered away by the hunters, but he lent a willing hand to the improvisation of a breakfast. Then he had an inspiration.

"Now that the deer-shooters are out of the way and Sis has gone off with the inebriated Chandler," he said, "let's do his runnin' first. Never mind; we'll find him."

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"From here to that point, almost a mile."

"Mr. Chandler, I will swim you from here to that point."

Kenneth, without opening his eyes, applauded.

"Fine! Sis can withdraw into the shrubbery while you peel. I'll row across with you and carry the clothes. Go on! I bet five dollars on Chandler, the human duck. He has webbed feet."

Chandler gave him to understand that he regarded the challenge indelicate.

"Then I'll swim it alone if Miss Angus will act on Kenneth's suggestion and retire."

"Of course, I will," Columbine answered. "There's a trail around the lake to that point. Mr. Chandler and I will ride around. Kenneth can escort you in the boat, with your clothes."

Roderick Ghent, the human polar bear, is now to perform. Kenneth chanted like a circus ringmaster, "Scout, Sis."

Ghent took the water with a high-speed, trudgeon-crawl stroke. Kenneth served as a convoy and life-guard in the boat, whooping merrily. The distance meant nothing to Ghent, for he had competed in water marathons. To his surprise, he found that the water was not cold enough to sap his strength, and he changed to a slow, easy breast-stroke that brought him to the chosen landing-place un-fatigued.

A fire was blazing on the shore, but Columbine and Chandler were gone. Spiked on a twig of pine beside the blaze was a note for Ghent, which read:

"Good boy! I was sure you could make it. I wouldn't have let you start if I hadn't known that the lake was fed by warm springs. See what a nice fire I built for you to toast yourself by. Mr. Chandler was pleased to gather the wood."

"PS. Follow us up Deerskin canyon I hope for some fun. Kenneth knows the way. We will ride slow."

When they caught sight of her, she seemed to be doing a war-dance.

"Come on! Quick!" she called out. "See what Chandler has killed!"

Kenneth looked, and also started to laugh. He threw himself off his horse, and howled with a madman's glee.

"Have you both lost your minds?" Ghent demanded.

"Look at Chandler," gurgled Kenneth.

Ghent glanced at his rival, who stood in morose silence, rifle in hand, beside something that looked big enough to be a dead steer.

"He has killed Dad's bull elk," explained Columbine weakly.

"He has slain the sacred bull! Kenneth chimed in. "Shun him. He is anathema!"

It was indeed, a magnificent elk, nobly antlered.

Then Columbine and Kenneth began, in strophe and antistrophe:

"Father paid \$2,000 for that bull elk!"

"It was the elk of all elks, destined to perpetuate his species!"

"The sacred bull bore a charmed life!"

"No one was allowed to harm that elk!"

"All the guides had extra-special orders to keep hunters away!"

They kept up this sort of thing until Mr. Chandler walked over to his horse and rode off toward the trail.

"Better follow him, Kenneth," suggested Columbine. "He may not be able to find the way back to camp—and he's not speaking to me just now. Mr. Ghent and I will come along when I have recovered."

"I'll comfort him," he remarked. "I'll tell him if he doesn't want to bring the head into camp as a souvenir—Adios, amigos!"

Ghent merely smiled in a beatific way and was silent. Finally he turned to Columbine and said tenderly:

"You little fiend!"

"Yes, Columbine did it," she replied. "Columbine did it with her little hatchet. She cannot tell a lie. She

led Mr. Chandler up to the sacred bull, and never warned him."

"It was hard on the elk. Why did you do it?"

"Because he was so mean to you about shooting that doe. Because Dad seems to be bent on my marrying him, and he bores me to death. Because Mr. Chandler is—oh, well, I must not beatty."

"And what am I?"

"You are—just you."

He told her very gravely what she was to him, and she listened with hanging head and eyes.

After a long time they arose to take the home trail, but she stopped

back to the glade where the elk had fallen. She stroked the bull's cold, hairy muzzle lightly and whispered: "Poor old thing! Please forgive me. She turned to Ghent.

"We won't tell